

Labu language

Labu (called **Hapa** by its speakers) is an Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea.

Contents

Locations

Contact

Phonology

- Vowels (orthographic)
- Consonants (orthographic)
- Tone contrasts

Morpho-syntax

- Pronouns and person markers
 - Free pronouns
- Possession
 - Genitive possession
- Deictics
- Numerals
- Names
- Negation
 - Naki
 - ŋaki
 - Ki
 - Negative verbs

References

Lebu	
Native to	Papua New Guinea
Region	Morobe Province
Ethnicity	1,600 (1989) ^[1]
Language family	Austronesian <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Malayo-Polynesian ▪ Oceanic ▪ Western Oceanic ▪ North New Guinea ? ▪ Ngero–Vitiaz ? ▪ Huon Gulf ▪ Markham ▪ Lower Markham ▪ Lebu
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	lbu
Glottolog	labu1248 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/labu1248) ^[2]

Locations

Labu is spoken by 1,600 people (1989) in three older villages and one new one across the Markham River from Lae in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea. The three older villages are Labubutu (locally known as Dusuku) (6.752271°S 146.960701°E), Labumeti (Ehalo) (6.772936°S 146.955698°E), and Labutali (Kakala) (6.87921°S 146.951178°E) in Wampar Rural LLG.^{[3][4]}

Contact

Although it belongs to the Lower Markham languages, Labu appears to have been strongly influenced by the coastal languages of the Huon Gulf, Bukawa in particular. For instance, Labu shows tonal contrasts, like Bukawa but unlike any of the Markham languages; and Labu numerals show separate forms for '3', '4', and

'5', like *Bukawa*, even though *salu* '2', *sidi* '3', and *sôha* '4' contain the Lower Markham numeral classifier *sV-. (The pattern for numerals in the other Markham languages is '1', '2', '2+1', '2+2', then 'hand' or '2+2+1', and so on.)

Phonology

Labu distinguishes 7 vowels and 17 consonants. The vowels also exhibit contrasts between high and low pitch (or "tone"), just as in *Yabêm*, the Lutheran mission lingua franca for the coastal languages of Morobe Province during much of the 20th century. The orthography of Labu is based on that of *Yabêm* (= *Jabêm*), except that *y* replaces *Yabêm* *j*.

Vowels (orthographic)

	<u>Front</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>Back</u>
<u>High</u>	i		u
<u>Upper mid</u>	ê		ô
<u>Lower mid</u>	e		o
<u>Low</u>		a	

Consonants (orthographic)

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Coronal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Voiceless stop</u>	p	t	k	
<u>Voiced stop</u>	b	d	g	
<u>Prenasalized</u>	mb	nd	ŋg	
<u>Nasal</u>	m	n	ŋ	
<u>Fricative</u>		s		h
<u>Lateral</u>		l		
<u>Approximant</u>	w	y		

Tone contrasts

The vowels of some words in Labu are distinguished by lowered pitch, which is marked orthographically by a grave accent. Labu distinctions in tone are thus based on register tone, not contour tone as in Mandarin Chinese. Register tone contrasts are a relatively recent innovation of the North Huon Gulf languages, which many Labu speakers include in their linguistic repertoires, so one should not look back to voice contrasts in Proto-Oceanic (POc) or some other ancestral language to explain the origins of tone contrasts in Labu. Instead, one should look to areal influences, primarily from neighboring Bukawa.

<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
a 'sun'	à 'tree, wood' (POc *kayu)
ani 'centipede' (POc *qalipan)	àñì 'one' (indefinite article)
maya 'shame'	mayà 'dead' (POc *mate)
ôpa 'crocodile' (POc *puqaya)	ôpà 'thouGght'
ô 'breadfruit' (POc *kuluR)	ò 'garden' (POc *quma)
u 'rain' (POc *qusan)	ù 'clay pot' (POc *kuron)

Morpho-syntax

Pronouns and person markers

Free pronouns

<u>Person</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Dual (D)</u>	<u>Trial (T)</u>	<u>Plural (P)</u>
1st person inclusive		a(lu)	(ê)sidi	a(ha)
1st person exclusive	ai	(ê)ma(lu)	êmidi	(ê)ma(ha)
2nd person	yê	(yê)môlu	(yê)môdi	(yê)môha
3rd person	ini	(ê)salu	(ê)sidi	(ê)sôha

Possession

In Labu, there are two types of possessive noun phrases: the genitive and the nominal (Siegel, 1984, p.95).

Genitive possession

<u>Person</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1st person inclusive		la
1st person exclusive	nda	mê
2nd person	na	mê
3rd person	na	sê

The genitive possessive noun phrase (PNP) conforms to the following structure:

PNP → NP1 (=possessor) POS (=possessive marker) NP2 (=possessed) (Siegel, 1984, p.95)

If the possessor has already been established earlier in the discourse and it is clear to both the speaker and listener, then the NP1 can be omitted from the possessive phrase (Siegel, 1984, p.95). If the omitted NP1 is an inanimate object then the possessive marker *êna* is used (Siegel, 1984, p.96).

Some examples of the genitive possessive noun phrase (taken from Siegel's *Introduction of the Labu Language*, p.95-96) are as follows:

(a) ai yu-dumala kô yê na ana

I 1S.PT-look at you 2S.POS mother

I saw your mother.

(b) amêna ñatô salu le sê hanô nda mêmâ

man old two this 3P.POS house stay village

These two old men's house was in the village.

(c) êmôha mô-kôna êna taiya mêmâ nda nôsôlô

we.XD 1X-look.at POS tyre 1P-stay rubbish

We looked at its tyre in the rubbish dump.

Nominal possession

Nominal possessive markers	Singular	Plural (D,T,P)
1st person inclusive		lêêna
1st person exclusive	ndêêna	mêêna
2nd person	nôôna	môôna
3rd person	nêêna	sêêna

The nominal possessive phrase (PNP) conforms to the following structure:

PNP → NP1 (possessor) POSN (nominal possessive marker) (Siegel, 1984, p.96)

When the thing being possessed is not explicitly stated within the phrase then the nominal possessive phrase is used (Siegel, 1984, p.96). If the possessor has already been established earlier in the discourse then the NP1 can be omitted from a possessive phrase (Siegel, 1984, p.97).

Some examples of the nominal possessive phrase (taken from Jeff Siegel's *Introduction to the Labu Language*, p.96-97) are as follows:

(a) ini gwê yê nôôna

he (3S.PT-)take you 2S.POSN

He took yours.

(b) tawala lene hanô lénê nêêna

door this house that 3S.POSN

This door is that house's.

(c) ai ya-gwê ndêêna

I 1S.PT-take 1S.POSN

I took mine.

Deictics

Labu deictics correlate with first, second, and third person, the first two of which have long and short forms. The third person singular free pronoun can also take deictic suffixes: *ini-ne* 'this/these one(s)', *ini-lê* 'that/those one(s)'. Deictics may occur either in place of nouns or postposed to nouns, as in *hanô lene* 'that house'.

- *le(ne)* 'near speaker'
- *lê(nê)* 'near addressee'
- *laê* 'away from speaker or addressee'

Numerals

Traditional Labu counting practices started with the digits of one hand, then continued on the other hand, and then the feet to reach '20', which translates as 'one person'. Higher numbers are multiples of 'one person'. Nowadays, most counting above '5' is done in Tok Pisin.

Numeral	Term	Gloss
1	tôgwatô/àñì	'one'
2	salu	'two'
3	sidi	'three'
4	sôha	'four'
5	ma-ipi	'hands-half/part'
6	ma-ipi anêndi tôgwatô (or maipa tômôlô)	'hands-half offspring/addition one'
7	ma-ipi anêndi salu (or maipa salu)	'hands-half offspring/addition two'
8	ma-ipi anêndi sidi (or maipa sidi)	'hands-half offspring/addition three'
9	ma-ipi anêndi sôha (or maipa sôha)	'hands-half offspring/addition four'
10	nômusu	'ten'
20	asamô-ni	'whole-one' (<i>samô</i> 'whole', <i>àñì</i> 'one')
60	asamô sidi	'whole three'

Names

Like most of the coastal languages around the Huon Gulf, Labu has a system of birth-order names.

Birth order	Sons (<i>ai</i>)	Daughters (<i>ahêna</i>)
1	aso	amê
2	amoá	hiya
3	anji	aya
4	angu	êta
5	ôlôndi	hênamu
6	?	asô`lô`/amênamu
7	asô`lô`	asôlô
8	asôlô	?
9	paloa	?

Negation

In order to express negation within simple sentences in Labu, either a dubitative (DUB) or a potential (POT) modal must be used in order to begin the predicate, with the negative marker *-ki* used to end the sentence.

Labu has three different forms of this negative marker, which are:

- naki
- ɳaki
- ki

The negative marker of *-ki* is derived from a verb stem, which explains why it uses the third person prefixes *na-* and *ŋa-*, which only otherwise attach to verbs. Despite deriving from a verb stem, because *ki* cannot stand alone within a verb phrase (VP), it cannot be classified as a verb.

The three forms of the negative marker, depending on the prefixes attached, are used in varying circumstances, dependent on the tense and mood of the utterance.

Naki

Naki is the negative marker used with the irrealis mood, specifically dubitative and imperative sentences. Examples of each are as follows (Siegel, 1984, p. 111-112):

yê mba nu-kusu naki
you POT 2S.IR-split IR.NEG
Don't spit.

pita wa ɳgwa na-sê gwà naki
Peter DUB FUT 3S.IR-go.up canoe IR.NEG
Peter might not get on the canoe.

ɳaki

The negative marker ɳaki is used in the realis mood, when declaring a statement of fact, as long as it is not past tense. This means that it is used for present and habitual events. An example of this marker in use can be seen in the following sentence (Siegel, 1984, p. 111):

ai mbi ndu-dumala kô gwà ñaki
I POT 1S.NR-look at canoe NR.NEG
I'm not looking at the canoe OR I don't see the canoe.

Ki

Ki is used to mark negation in sentences that utilise the past tense, meaning that it is used for events that have already occurred. An example is (Siegel, 1984, p. 111-112):

ai mba yô-nô ni ki
I POT 1S.OT-drink coconut NEG
I didn't drink the coconut.

Negative verbs

As well as the use of the negative marker -ki in its various forms, Labu also has verbs which are inherently negative. These are the verbs -le to not want, or -ya pale to not know. As with other verbs within Labu, prefixes are added to the verb to signal number and tense. Examples are as follows (Siegel, 1984, p. 122):

ai yêgi palê mba ñgwa nda-di pô
I 1S.PT.hit not.know SUB FUT 1S.IR-swim water
I don't know if I'll go swimming.

ai ya-le mba ndêna ê
I 1S.PT-not.want SUB 1S.IR.eat fish
I don't want to eat fish.

References

1. Labu language (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/lbu/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Labu" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/labu1248>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Holzknecht, Susanne (1989). *The Markham Languages of Papua New Guinea*. Pacific Linguistics. [ISBN 0-85883-394-8](#).
4. United Nations in Papua New Guinea (2018). "Papua New Guinea Village Coordinates Lookup" (<https://data.humdata.org/dataset/village-coordinates-lookup>). *Humanitarian Data Exchange*. 1.31.9.

- Anon. (2004). Labu organized phonology data. Summer Institute of Linguistics. [1] (<http://www.sil.org/pacific/png/pubs/0000199/Labu.pdf>)
- Siegel, Jeff (1984). "Introduction to the Labu language." In Malcolm Ross, Jeff Siegel, Robert Blust, Michael A. Colburn, W. Seiler, *Papers in New Guinea Linguistics*, No. 23, 83-159. Series A-69. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Ross, Malcolm (1988). *Proto Oceanic and the Austronesian languages of western Melanesia*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.

This page was last edited on 21 December 2019, at 15:30 (UTC).

Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.